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ABSTRACT

Newly-conceived Latin programs, designed to improve the English reading and vocabulary skills of pupils of all backgrounds and abilities, have been initiated in several urban school districts. The studies, undertaken in Philadelphia, Indianapolis, the District of Columbia, Los Angeles, Alexandria, Erie County (Pa.), Illinois, and Worcester (Mass.), show that these programs have proven very successful in achieving their goals with urban pupils. Latin also offers other benefits which are less tangible than the linguistic ones. For example, the relevance of Latin and classical studies is patent in visual arts and literature. Greece and Rome offer large-scale opportunities for observation of republican and/or democratic institutions and society. The social problems of the ancient world offer the modern student fresh insights into contemporary problems. The relevance of Latin is also found in the influence the ancients' moral values still have on Western civilization today. Therefore, Latin deserves emphasis in the curriculum at all levels. Exploratory courses should be given in grades 4 through 8 and Latin should be taught as an elective subject in secondary schools at all levels. An audio-lingual approach should be used, rather than the traditional grammar-translation method which does not meet the needs of modern urban youth. (CFM)

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A WHITE PAPER ON LATIN AND THE CLASSICS FOR URBAN SCHOOLS

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The Committee on Classics
in the Great Cities' Schools

1977

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LATIN AND THE CLASSICS
FOR URBAN SCHOOLS

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FOREWORD

In recent years a growing amount of credible research has been compiled to indicate that the study of Latin is a uniquely efficient tool in expanding the English vocabulary and reading skills of urban pupils of all backgrounds and abilities. The deepening national concern over the decline in literacy among urban pupils has caused some school administrators and policy makers to turn to freshly conceived Latin programs in their efforts to upgrade the English functioning of the young people in our cities and to improve the quality of their education through a subject that is the fountainhead and source of the humanities.

The Committee on Classics in the GreatCities' Schools is pleased to present this White Paper as a service to busy urban school administrators. The paper provides:

- a summary of the rationale for teaching Latin and the Classics in urban schools
- summaries of various recent research studies on the outcomes of teaching Latin to urban pupils
- recommendations on where Latin and the Classics should be taught in urban schools
- recommendations on curriculum
- suggestions on resources available for urban school districts desiring to initiate or expand offerings in Latin and the Classics

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The Committee on Classics in the Great Cities' Schools is affiliated with the American Classical League, the Classical Association of the Atlantic States, and the Pennsylvania Classical Association and is grateful for the help of these organizations. Gratitude is also expressed to the Division of Foreign Languages Education of the School District of Philadelphia for its assistance in the production of this paper.

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I. THE RATIONALE FOR LATIN AND THE CLASSICS IN URBAN SCHOOLS

National Concern over Declining Literacy

There is a high degree of concern nationally over the teaching of basic skills. Johnny can't read. Johnny can't write. Johnny can't express himself orally. SAT scores are declining. Young people graduate from public high schools in big cities and elsewhere as functional illiterates. New reading programs are introduced into our schools at tremendous expense with generally little positive results. In fact, many times there are negative results. College professors claim that they must offer remedial courses in basic skills and that the "now generation" of students is largely unable to cope with college-level reading materials. Employers claim that recent high school graduates cannot handle ordinary directions written in simple English. Penologists attempt to relate declining literacy and communications skills with rising violence in our society.

Latin Programs in Urban Schools - Rays of Hope

Amid this rather bleak picture there are, of course, rays of hope. Among these are the newly-conceived Latin programs designed to upgrade the English reading and vocabulary skills of pupils of all backgrounds and abilities that have been initiated in several urban school districts. These Latin programs have proven very successful in achieving their goals.

In addition to the right of education at public expense, there is the right that children have to the kind of education that produces literacy. Literacy is important for all citizens but among urban pupils it is often a matter of survival. There is now documentary evidence that the study of Latin helps produce literacy in English.

The Linguistic Relevance of Latin

The linguistic relevance of Latin stems from the fact that the English vocabulary pupils hear, speak, read, and write is derived largely from Latin. The technical vocabularies of such fields as medicine, religion, biology, psychology, chemistry, pharmacology, space science, philosophy and law are drawn from Latin. The communications and advertising media are replete with allusions to classical mythology, history, and the Latin language. English literature is frequently modeled on the literatures of Greco-Roman antiquity and contains references to Latin and the classical heritage. The languages used today in many countries in Europe, Latin America, Africa, and Asia likewise bear the strong imprint of classical influence.

In respect to vocabulary Latin has much in common with English and can be used as a valuable instrument for building the English vocabulary of students. Latin roots, prefixes, and suffixes are keys for unlocking the meanings of English derivatives and cognates.

A pupil who knows the meaning of the Latin word aqua("water") finds such English words as aquarium, aqueduct, aquatic, aquamarine, Aquarius, and aquaeous easier to understand. Structurally Latin is very different from English in that it is highly inflected. In other words, the spelling of a Latin word often changes according to how it is used. Also, Latin does not have the rigid word order requirements of English. Latin "works" differently from English and thereby affords the Latin student the opportunity to step outside of his own language and acquire a Sprachgefühl - a linguistic instinct - that is helpful in using English. There is a great deal of truth to the oft repeated statement that " I did not understand English grammar until I studied Latin."

The Philadelphia Study

There has been a formal research evaluation of the elementary school Latin program in the School District of Philadelphia. In this program fourth, fifth, and sixth grade pupils of all backgrounds and abilities received 15 to 20 minutes of daily instruction in Latin from itinerant Latin teachers. The teachers used new multisensory instructional materials prepared by the Division of Foreign Languages of the School District of Philadelphia. Under the leadership of Dr. Eleanor L. Sandstrom, Director of Foreign Languages, the program has grown steadily and in June 1977 included over 14,000 pupils in 125 elementary schools. Objectives of the program are:

1. to introduce children orally to basic Latin structure and vocabulary

2. to extend the English vocabulary of children especially throughthe study of Latin roots and affixes

3. to acquaint children with classical culture and its influence on the present

4. to stimulate interest on the part of pupils in the study of Latin, foreign languages in general, and the humanities

The evaluative study, conducted by the Division of Instructional Research, showed that the program had achieved its goals. The achievemennt of pupils in the first three goals was measured by criterion-referenced tests which contained items on Latin structure, classical culture, and English vocabulary. The 1971 v (Vocabulary) subtest of the Iowa Test of Basic Skills was used to compare pupils who had studied Latin with those who had not. Questionnaires were administered to pupils, parents, proncipals, and classroom teachers of the pupils where Latin teachers operated in order to assess their reactions to the program.

The three major findings of the evaluation were:

1.Performance of Latin pupils on the Iowa Vocabulary subtest was one full year higher than the performance of matched control pupils.

2. Latin pupils achieved mastery of the course content in Latin language skills, knowledge of classical culture, and English vocabulary.

3. The survey of pupils, parents, principals, and classroom teachers showed that the Latin program had wide acceptance and support.

The Indianapolis Study

Another such study involved the elementary school Latin program in the Indianapolis Public Schools. In the summer of 1973, the Indianapolis Public Schools received a three year Title III ESEA grant to develop a project which is predicated on the hypothesis that English language skills and control of syntactic structures can be measurably improved through participation in a specially designed Latin ESEA program which stressed the importance of Latin root words. Rita Sheridan, the Supervisor of Foreign Languages, was the project director. The general goals of this project were to assess whether or not the study of Latin would:

1.expand the verbal functioning of sixth grade children in English

2. broaden their cultural horizons and stimulate interest in the humanities

The project involved approximately 400 sixth grade pupils in six schools. Two additional schools with a total of approximately 100 sixth grade pupils were selected as control groups. All participating pupils were studying Latin and classical civilization in a program coordinated with work in regular classes. There was a thirty minute lesson each school day taught by a Latin specialist. The complete battery (Form H) of the intermediate Metropolitan Achievement Test was used as a pre-test in October, 1973; Form H was used as a post-test in March, 1974.

At the end of the first year of this three year project, the experimental group showed within the five month period between the pre-test and the post-test a gain over the control group on the following subtests of the intermediate battery of the Metropolitan Achievement Test:

1. Eight months on Word Knowledge
2.One year in Reading
3. One year and one month in Language
4. Four months in Spelling
5. Seven months in Math Computation
6. Eight months in Math Concepts

7. Nine months in Math Problem Solving
8. Five months in Science
9. Seven months in Social Studies

Results for all three years of the study were similar. In the evaluation report for the 1975-76 school year, the pre-test showed no significant differences between the experimental (i.e., Latin) group and the control group in the areas of Word Knowledge, Reading, Language, Math Computation, Math Concepts, and Math Problem Solving. The control group did, however, surpass the experimental group by six months in the Spelling pre-test. The post-test indicated that the Latin students surpassed the control group in all areas, including Spelling, by a substantial number of months and in the Language test, by a full year. Fifth and sixth grade classroom teachers were asked to write comments about the Latin program as part of the evaluation; these comments were in general very positive. Criterion-referenced tests indicated that the Latin students had mastered the content of the curriculum.

The Indianapolis school district plans to make the elementary school Latin program operative in all elementary schools in view of the proven effectiveness of the program in upgrading basic skills of urban pupils of all backgrounds and abilities.

The District of Columbia Study

Another study of the effect of Latin study on English reading skills involved the elementary school Latin program in the Public Schools of the District of Columbia. Latin was found to boost pupils' reading scores.

The study, conducted during the 1970-71 school year, involved 1,132 pupils in public elementary schools and tested three hypotheses:

1. There are no significant differences in the reading achievement scores of a sample of sixth grade students receiving Latin instruction and pupils taking no foreign language instruction.

2. There are no significant differences between the reading achievement scores of sixth grade students receiving French or Spanish instruction and students taking no foreign language instruction.

3. Reading achievement scores of students taking any kind of foreign language instruction do not differ significantly from each other.

Using English reading achievement scores in vocabulary, comprehension, and total reading as the basis of analysis, the students with Latin (10 classes) were found to be five months ahead of the students receiving no foreign language instruction. Comparison between the

French-Spanish classes (10) and the non-foreign language classes (25) revealed a four month edge for the foreign language classes. The Latin group had only one year of instruction while the French-Spanish had four years of instruction. Latin study begins in the sixth grade while Spanish and French begins in the third. It should be noted that most sixth grade classes contained pupils who were not reading a grade level.

The Los Angeles Study

A recent study evaluated the Los Angeles Unified School District's elementary school Language Arts through Latin program in terms of its English reading vocabulary and comprehension objectives. The Los Angeles program - also called the Language Transfer Project - was conceived by Professor Albert Baca of California State University at Northridge who is now in-service director of the project. Now in its third year, the project is under the direction of Dr. T. Jules Mandel, Foreign Language Instructional Specialist and two cordinators, Thelma Alpert and Kay Neshat. Latin instruction is presented by regular fifth and sixth grade teachers to their classes for 20 minutes daily as part of the language arts bloc. The teachers are specially trained for the project. About 30 schools were involved in the project in which over half of the students were of Spanish language background.

A pre-test -post-test design was employed with the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skils. Comparison groups were also pre- and post-tested. Objectives relating to vocabulary, word analysis, and other language and cultural concepts were assessed with criterion-referenced tests. Differences in scores were tested for significance, where appropriate. Self-concept was assessed with the Far West Regional Laboratory Self Concept Scale in a post-test only design. Differences in mean scores between target and comparison groups were tested for significance. Student interests and attitudes were assessed with rating scales.

At the fifth grade level the mean gain in vocabulary of target students was eight months; the comparison group gain was six months. At the sixth grade level the mean gain of target students was nine months; the comparison group gain was six months. The scores of the target group students on criterion referenced tests of word analysis and auditory discrimination were higher than those of comparison pupils. The scores of the target group students on criterion referenced tests of word origin and Roman history and culture indicated mastery in these areas. The self concepts and interest in language study were significantly higher for target students than for comparison pupils. Student rating by target students indicated high interest in the project. Researchers concluded that the project was successful in improving the vocabulary and reading comprehension scores of target students

by more than a month for each month of instruction. The project was successful in improving student knowledge of word origin, structural analysis skills, and Roman history and culture. The project was effective in increasing the self concept and interest in language study of the pupils.

The study was continued into the 1976-77 school year with similar positive results.

The Alexandria (Va.) Study

A Latin Pilot Study at the elementary school level was initiated by the Alexandria (Va.) City Public Schools in 1972-73 and continued into 1973-74. The project, under the Pilot Studies Program of the Virginia State Department of Education, received matching funds and technical assistance through the Department's Division of Education Research and Statistics. The purpose of the project was to increase the English reading skills of pupils. One Latin teacher served in two elementary schools.

Control groups in two comparable schools not having Latin were set up. Experimental (i.e., Latin) and control groups in grades five and six were pre-tested and post-tested with SRA (Science Research Associates) Assessment Survey; the Gates-MacGinitie Vocabulary, Comprehension, Speed, and Accuracy tests; and the Slosson Oral Reading Test. The experimental group performed better than the control group on the Slosson Oral Reading Test in the post-test. No other statistically significant differences were observed between the control and experimental groups in the post-tests. The smallness of the control group (caused by massive school reorganization during the study to achieve racial integration), the difficulties involved in adjusting to a new school environment on the part of some students, and the turnover in classroom teachers, administrative personnel, and pupils caused the researchers to call for further study under better conditions. Evaluations of the program made by the pupils themselves, their parents, classroom teachers, consultants, principals, central office administrators, and state Dept. of Education personnel were very positive.

Tests and Surveys Sponsored by the Department of Classics of the University of Massachusetts at Amherst

A study of the fifth and sixth grade Latin program in Easthampton, Massachusetts, substantiated the findings in other urban school districts that Latin upgrades English vocabulary and reading skills of pupils. A Latin program for fifth and sixth graders at the Park School in Easthampton, Massachusetts, was initiated by the Classics Dept. of the University of Massachusetts and the local public school district. Two hundred and fifty pupils in nine classes received twenty minutes

of instruction daily in Latin. The purpose of the program was to stimulate and strengthen the pupils' reading skills in English and to provide cultural enrichment.

Many of the pupils read below grade level in English. Instructional activities included conversation in Latin, word games on English derivatives, producing plays in Latin based on mythology, and constructing models. For evaluation purposes pre- and post-tests of the Vocabulary Section of the Stanford Achievement Test were administered. The scores of the Latin pupils (experimental group) were compared with the scores of the previous sixth grade class which did not have Latin (control group). Latin pupils showed marked improvement in all six categories evaluated, e.g., 1190 more of the Latin pupils than the control group scored above grade level; 2490 more showed more than two years of growth.

Opinion surveys responded to by approximately 300 pupils, 200 parents, and by principals and teachers in four Massachusetts communities (Norwell, West Roxbury, Amherst, and Stockbridge) where pilot projects were administered by the Dept. of Classics of the University of Massachusetts, showed affirmative attitudes on the part of all these groups, both toward Latin as subject matter and toward new ways of teaching the classics.

The Erie County (Pa.) Study

A study in Erie County, Pa., looked at the effect of Latin on College Entrance Examination Board scores, English grades, and vocabulary growth. Students in this high school were drawn equally from urban and rural areas. Three hundred and fifty two pupils were selected at random. The experimental group (Latin pupils) was matched with the control group (pupils not studying Latin) in terms of I.Q. and grade level. Performances were compared in the following areas:

1. The School and College Ability Test Verbal

2. The College Entrance Examination Scholastic Aptitude Test

3. Grades in the two most recent semesters of English

4. The Nationwide English Vocabulary Examination

The comparisons of these students showed that a background in Latin was a definite aid to high scores in all areas listed. The study of Latin contributed to better performance in tests in vocabulary, verbal ability, and in grades in English.

Human Engineering Laboratory Studies

Bulletin No. 115 of the Human Engineering Laboratory refers to the importance of foreign language study and Latin in particular in the expansion of English vocabulary skills. In a Washington D.C. study the backgrounds in foreign language study of 220 adults were tabulated

and compared to their English vocabulary test scores. Those with no foreign language background had an average English vocabulary percentile of 28. Those with Latin averaged 58. In a related study Richard Bowker conducted a preliminary examination of the effect of Latin study on vocabulary level. He administered a vocabulary test to two groups of juniors at a private secondary school in Boston. One group had two years of Latin in addition to a modern language. The other group had two years of a modern language but no Latin. Bowker found that the Latin group scored higher than the non-Latin group in the vocabulary test.

University of Illinois Study

A course in the enlargement of students' English vocabulary through the study of Latin and Greek roots and their derivatives was evaluated at the University of Illinois. This course was developed by the Dept. of Classics out of concern over the national decline in the Scholastic Aptitude Test scores in verbal ability over the past several years. One component of the course makes use of computer assisted instruction as available on the PLATO IV system. A standardized vocabulary test was administered before the course began and was repeated (in another form) at its conclusion. Thus far, all students have improved - some by as much as 40 percentile points.

The Worcester (Mass.) Study

Seventh grade children in the Providence St. Junior High School in Worcester, Massachusetts, have shown dramatic improvement in their English vocabulary and reading comprehension scores as a result of participation in an innovative Latin program begun in 1975. Children with reading scores at 4.5 to 5.5 grade level in September, 1975, increased their vocabulary scores by 14 months and their reading comprehension by 19 months in one school year. Generally, students this far behind would be expected to progress about six months. The Latin program attempts to give students a feeling for myth and poetry as well as to interest them in the study of etymology.

Two groups were selected from incoming seventh graders. One was the pilot group which would take Latin five times a week and the other was a control group which would follow the regular program without Latin. Pupils were selected at random from those scoring 2.5 to 1.5 below the normal reading level. Letters explaining the goals and objectives were sent to the parents of the pilot group. Leo Glennon, supervisor of the testing program for the Worcester school system, developed a pre- and post- testing program for the course. Pilot group pupils far outstripped their counterparts in the control group in vocabulary scores (by eight months) and in reading comprehension scores (by 13 months). Researchers also point out improvement in self image, motivation, and self reliance in the pilot group. Research and testing on the new program is continuing according to Anita L. Fish, Chairperson of the Foreign Language Dept. at the junior high school.

Latin - A Unique Congeries of Benefits for Urban Pupils

As the foregoing studies indicate, Latin holds unique value for urban pupils in expanding their English vocabulary and reading skills and their general sense of language. But Latin also offers students other benefits which, while they are less tangible perhaps than the linguistic benefits, are nevertheless real and important.

Esthetically, the relevance of Latin and Classical Studies is patent in visual arts and literature. In the area of visual arts, the students see libraries, banks, public buildings, houses, and monuments patterned on the edifices of antiquity. Many of the great paintings and statues which adorn the museums, parks, and public buildings in our cities are on classical themes or classical in style. In the area of literature, the masterful writings of Homer, Vergil, Sophocles, Cicero, Catullus, Plato, St. Augustine, Plautus, and others have much to say to modern students. The craftsman's finish and sophistication of these writings offer modern students a unique type of humanistic experience.

Part of the socio-political relevance of Latin and Classical Studies rests on the fundamental commonalities of attitude, stance, and situation that exists in our present culture and that of the ancients. Part lies in the differences between ourselves and the ancients. Greece and Rome offer the only large scale opportunities for observation of republican and/or democratic institutions and society before our own Republic.

The social problems of the ancient world offer the modern student fresh insights into our own problems. Modern students need an understanding of how the ancients dealt with class struggles, slavery, colonialism, and race relations in order to understand our social problems. The political crises of Cicero's Rome and Pericles' Athens offer many parallels with our times. Moreover, our political system and governmental structure are patterned on that of the Greeks and Romans and were planned by persons thoroughly imbued with classical learning.

Morally the relevance of Latin presents itself in many ways. The moral issues faced by our Greco-Roman forbears are those we face today. The influence of their values (as expressed in Epicureanism and Stoicism, to cite just two examples) has permeated every stage of Western man's development and continues today. Christianity, sometimes labelled as the last great gift of classical civilization to our own, affects the lives of all our students - either directly or indirectly. Modern concepts of ethics and philosophy have been called footnotes on the ancients.

II. RECOMMENDATIONS ON WHERE LATIN AND THE CLASSICS SHOULD BE TAUGHT IN URBAN SCHOOL DISTRICTS

The experience of urban school systems which have been using Latin as a vehicle for expanding the English vocabulary and reading skills of pupils of all backgrounds and abilities seems to indicate that Latin deserves much more emphasis in the curriculum at all levels than it has received in recent years. Exploratory courses which expose large numbers of young pupils to Latin should be instituted. Such courses have been given successfully anywhere from grade four through grade eight. Such courses should be regarded as part of the basic education of every child rather than as the preserve of the college bound or the intellectually elite.

Latin should also be taught as an elective subject in all senior high, junior high, and middle schools. Courses at this level should be geared to accomodate students of all backgrounds and abilities.

Curricular offerings in Classical Greek and in interdisciplinary classical humanities courses should be available wherever qualified teachers can be found to teach them.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING NEW CURRICULA FOR LATIN AND THE CLASSICS

Many creative and interesting curricular materials for the teaching of Latin have been developed both commercially and by local school districts in metropolitan areas. These new curricular materials stress aural-oral skills in the Latin language itself, copious treatment of English vocabulary development based on Latin roots and affixes, and rich cultural content. These materials capitalize on such "new" concepts as structural linguistics, the direct method of language teaching, programmed instruction, multisensory media, and attention to the affective domain. While this White Paper is not the appropriate place to describe in detail the new curricula that have been developed, it should be clear that reinstitution of the old "dry as dust" traditional grammar-translation approach to Latin is not being advocated here because such an approach does not meet the needs of modern urban youth. Descriptions of some of the more recent and successful curricula for the teaching of Latin are found in New Approaches to the Teaching of the Classics: The Report of the 1971-72 CAAS Working Committee available from the ERIC Document Reproduction Service, Computer Microfilm International Corp., Box 190, Arlington, Va. 22210. Be sure to specify the ERIC order number which is ED 055 493.

In addition to language offerings in Latin and Greek, interdisciplinary courses in the classical humanities also seem desirable. A course on Africa in Classical Antiquity which deals with the role of Blacks and Africans in the ancient world, racial attitudes in classical antiquity, and prominent Africans in Greco-Roman literature, history, and culture is a possibility. A course in Word Power through Latin which emphasizes expansion of English vocabulary through Latin roots, prefixes, and suffixes and which is designed for a flexible scheduling pattern is another possibility. Resources for such courses have already been developed.

IV. RESOURCES AVAILABLE FOR URBAN SCHOOL DISTRICTS DESIRING TO INITIATE OR EXPAND OFFERINGS IN LATIN AND THE CLASSICS

The Committee on Classics in the Great Cities' Schools stands ready to provide consultative service on program planning and curriculum implementation to any local school or school district. Such consultative service may be provided by letter, telephone, personal contacts, or some combination of these means. The Committee on Classics in the Great Cities' Schools is a kind of national clearinghouse of information on the teaching of Latin in an urban context. It is ready to elicit aid of various professional organizations on behalf of school districts. Within limits it may be able to provide some curriculum and instructional materials to school districts or schools without charge. It will also be available to assist with teacher recruitment though the placement services of various classical organizations. The Committee may be contacted through either of its co-chairpersons, viz.

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Some school districts may find well qualified and enthusiastic Latin teachers already on their staffs. Such teachers - with some staff development or inservice- could be used to staff new Latin classes without any substantial additional cost to local school districts. The Committee on Classics in the Great Cities' Schools would be happy, within the framework of its resources, to assist in the planning and implementation of such staff development or inservice. Sometimes the Classics Department of a local college or university may be helpful in such an effort.

The items listed in the Bibliography of this White Paper may also be helpful to administrators planning new programs in Latin and the Classics

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